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TO
ALL READING MEMBERS
OF THE
BOOK-CLUB, HUNTINGDON.

May 28, 1776.

GENTLEMEN,

OUR Society which hath already subsisted a long series of years — And, (except the Dust I once raised improvidently, from a *Cacoethes scribendi librorum marginibus*) in the utmost unity and concord — having yet very lately, like most other Communities sometimes, suffered a severe Convulsion — it was thought expedient at our last Meeting, to call together all its Members this Day, to consider of ways and means for its further more durable and creditable support, and continuance — by abridging, altering, and adding such rules and regulations as the majority of us shall judge to be necessary.

And, because I have been chiefly (I must acknowledge) instrumental in occasioning an uncommon Defection — [a most desirable, most devoutly to be wish'd-for falling off, and Abdication!

dition!] by a publication perhaps of mine, in the Cambridge Paper — I am further bold to declare, that I am not greatly sorry for it;—That, if I am not very much mistaken, Whatever motion I have made Here, since the precipitate admission of the B. of L— (without Ballot) was for the honour and glory of our noble selves; —to the prejudice of no one Individual— nor against any recorded Rule, enrolled in our Archives.

Should these however, be found defective— should it, upon a review of them, be found necessary to alter any of them, to change them, or to add unto them — I shall not withdraw, or withhold my ready assent — but would wish them to be first read aloud, and considered before we reject them, change them, or add unto them.

That, which directeth a ballotting for Books, I have indeed, an Objection to, for this very good (I think) and justifiable reason — That, a Negative may be put to any, for no other account, than that such an One proposed it:— And therefore, let all ballotting herein be laid aside! that an open reason may be alledged, why any Book is proper, or improper to be received.

[*Figere si liceat, liceatque refigere Leges!*]

To that also, I have my Objection, which resembles us to the Robin Hood Society in London — which hammers down every Oration in five minutes; — and to the intended one of Limitation, by sometimes shutting our Door, and tying up the Knocker: — But would wish to continue that, which directs New Members to be ballotted for; because, if I like not the Person, there is no occasion I should make him my Enemy by declaring openly, that I am not his Friend, or do not choose to make him more than my bottle companion.

And, whereas we are a Society, or would be thought One, of some Thirst after Knowledge — if we are no publishers ourselves



selves — why should We circumscribe the means of allaying it in those deeper waters of Literature, which a five-shilling plummet cannot fathom?

*A little Learning is a dangerous Thing!
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring,
 Whose shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain;
 Whilst drinking largely, sobers us again.*

POPE.

It is therefore I wish, instead of five shillings, we subscribe a Guinea, which would enable us to furnish Books, worth preserving; which might be kept as a standing Library for ourselves, and our Successors of the reading Generation, that shall come after us, into this Society:

[*Senex ferit arbores alteri sæculo profuturas.*]

Whereas at present, we have mostly fugitive Pieces of no use, no utility, no benefit at all to posterity: — too much like the Sybil's Leaves, that are scattered and dispersed Here and There, occasionally, and the greater number of them very deservedly remembered no more.

Whereas too, I would wish to see this Society upon the most respectable Footing, (as has been already hinted, and declared among us) I hope there will be no Objection to our electing a President, with a Vice-President, to direct and manage the business that shall cursorily arise — and a Treasurer, (I would add) who may receive our Subscriptions, and answer all such Draughts upon Him from them, or either of them, as may be necessary for a quarterly discharge, at least, of our Bookseller's Demands; giving moreover an annual, or shorter account to the Board, of the State of his Finances —

Quippe

Quippe, ictus piscator sapit.

A burnt Child dreads the Fire.

Nemo sine vitiis nascitur.

We are All black Beans.

And there are many Dawkses — many sad Apothecaries in the world,

*Whose privilege, They mostly find in Evil,
Is, that They go unpunish'd to the Devil.*

[Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras!]

These, Gentlemen, are the general motives for Alteration I have heard, and have been thinking of; and would beg leave to offer to your better Consideration: not doubting, but every One of you see occasion for Amendment in our present tottering (and very lately rotten) State of Denmark — and will freely give your Opinions: — having nevertheless, a strict regard to the Το ὄρεσθον, το μόνον: —

For want of Decency is want of Sense.

